

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-4 (Canceled).

5 (Currently Amended). A bulk food product slicing machine comprising:

- a rotatable blade having a sharp edge for slicing a bulk food product;
- a motor operably connected to said rotatable blade for rotating said blade against a bulk food product to slice the bulk food product into slices; and
- a blade sharpening assembly moveably mounted adjacent to said rotatable blade and having at least one sharpening stone for sharpening said rotatable blade when moved into blade sharpening position with said sharpening stone engaging the edge of said blade; said sharpening stone normally positioned radially outward from and above the edge of said blade and being substantially shielded from slicing debris during operation of the food product slicing machine by a retractable shield mounted adjacent to said sharpening stone; said retractable shield being retracted from said sharpening stone (912, 2908) as said sharpening stone is moved linearly downwardly into blade sharpening position.

6-19 (Canceled).